



FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Backcountry Information Center Grand Canyon National Park

The National Park Service is proposing to renovate Maswik Transportation Center, located in the Grand Canyon Village area of Grand Canyon National Park. The purpose of the proposal is to consolidate the existing backcountry office, the existing river/special use permits office and associated storage into an upgraded facility located and designed to best meet the needs of park operations and the visiting public. The Backcountry Information Center at Maswik Transportation Center would include a roof-covered public lobby, visitor contact windows, restrooms, offices, and storage. The facility would continue to serve as a prominent Grand Canyon Village route shuttle bus stop. The proposal includes remodeling the existing building to accommodate the consolidated backcountry, river, and special-use permitting functions. The roofline and supporting structure would remain unchanged. All of the spatial requirements of the facility would be met with the design of a new floor plan within the existing roofline and supporting structure. The proposed rehabilitation is needed because:

- The backcountry office and river/special use permits offices are currently in two separate buildings that were not originally designed to house them. The river/special use permits office (a trailer) is too small to meet the needed functions and space for the program.
- The Maswik Transportation Center was not designed for use as an office building and, in its current capacity, does not adequately meet the needs of the backcountry information program in its current configuration.
- The required long-term file storage is in a third facility (container) that is also too small and is separate from the other two buildings.

In October 2002 the National Park Service (NPS) prepared an *Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Backcountry Information Center*. This EA, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, analyzes the impacts that would likely result from implementation of the project. The environmental assessment evaluated two alternatives, Alternative A, the No Action Alternative and Alternative B, the proposed action.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Maswik Transportation Center has served as a Village Route shuttle bus stop combined with the Backcountry Information Center. Under the preferred alternative, the Maswik Transportation Center will be renovated to provide a facility to accommodate all backcountry, river/special use permit functions and associated storage. The Backcountry Information Center at Maswik Transportation Center will continue to serve as a Village Route shuttle bus stop.

The proposed renovated Maswik Transportation Center will be approximately 4652 square feet in size from outside corner to outside corner, of which approximately 2160 square feet within the existing footprint will be new construction and the remaining will be remodeled space. The proposed renovation includes the installation of a fire and intrusion alarm system and a fire sprinkler system. The renovated building will include a lobby, sales area, restrooms, offices, and storage. The new exterior walls, windows and doors, necessary for the addition of interior space within the existing roofline, will match the existing structure in materials and colors. The building will meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. The roofline and supporting structure will remain unchanged. All of the spatial requirements of the facility will be met with

the design of a new floor plan within the existing roofline and supporting structure. Utilities are already in place; the building has existing parking and is close to a shuttle stop. Because this alternative renovates an existing facility, estimated costs for this alternative were lower than any of the alternatives previously considered. Renovation of the existing building to combine all backcountry service and administrative needs into one facility will benefit visitors by providing a central location for all backcountry and river permitting functions.

The river/special use permit office trailer will be vacated and all functions will relocate to the renovated facility. The trailer will be made available for other park uses at that time. It is likely that the trailer will be moved to accommodate future plans for a residential housing development in this area, identified as the Yacc housing area in the GMP (NPS 1995). The storage container, located in the NPS maintenance area, will be emptied and made available for other NPS uses. It is also likely that this container will be moved from this historic maintenance area, to minimize the visual intrusion of this type of facility on the surrounding historic district.

The mitigation measures listed below are considered part of the preferred alternative and will be followed during project implementation. These actions were developed to lessen the potential for adverse impacts from implementing the preferred alternative, and have proven to be very effective in reducing environmental impacts on previous projects.

- The staging area for the construction office (a trailer) and construction equipment and material storage will be located in previously disturbed sites or existing paved areas near the Backcountry Information Center building. All staging areas would be returned to pre-construction conditions once construction is complete. Standards for this, and methods for determining when the standards are met, would be developed in consultation with the Park Restoration Biologist.
- If dust becomes a problem during work, sprinkling with water will occur to reduce dust, both on roadways used and/or in the construction site.
- Construction equipment will not idle for long periods to reduce noise and air quality impacts on site.
- Construction zones will be fenced with construction tape, snow fencing, or some similar material before any construction activity. The fencing will define the construction zone and confine activity to the minimum area required for construction. All protection measures will be clearly stated in the construction specifications and workers will be instructed to avoid conducting activities beyond the construction zone as defined by the construction zone fencing.
- Prior to any exterior structural work, the park's Restoration Biologist will be notified to ensure that the native plants in the planter boxes surrounding the building are not impacted.
- Construction workers and supervisors will be provided with tree pruning guidelines. The adherence to these guidelines will minimize damage to trees during project implementation. The park's Restoration Biologist will be notified prior to the manipulation of vegetation to ensure impacts to vegetation are minimized.
- Construction workers and supervisors will be informed about special status species. Contract provisions will require the cessation of construction activities if a species were discovered in the project area, until park staff re-evaluates the project. This will allow modification of the contract for any protection measures determined necessary to protect the discovery.
- California condor and Mexican spotted owl conservation measures developed as part of the "Batch" consultation with Fish and Wildlife Service (NPS 2002) for construction projects in the park will be adhered to during project implementation. The Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the park's determination that implementation of the Backcountry Information Center project, as one of 61 construction projects occurring over the next five years, may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the Mexican spotted owl or the California condor. Concurrence was received on July 9, 2002. These mitigation measures include:

- Prior to the start of a construction project, the Park will contact personnel monitoring California condor locations and movement within the Park to determine the locations and status of condors in or near the project area.
- If a condor occurs at the construction site, construction will cease until it leaves on its own or until permitted personnel employ techniques that result in the individual condor leaving the area.
- Construction workers and supervisors will be instructed to avoid interaction with condors and to contact the appropriate Park or Peregrine Fund personnel immediately if and when condor(s) occur at a construction site.
- The construction site will be cleaned up at the end of each day that work is being conducted (i.e., trash disposed of, scrap materials picked up) to minimize the likelihood of condors visiting the site. Park condor staff will complete a site visit to the area to ensure adequate clean-up measures are taken.
- To prevent water contamination and potential poisoning of condors, a vehicle fluid- leakage and spill plan will be developed and implemented for this project. This plan will be reviewed by the Park biologist for adequacy in addressing condors.
- If a new structure occurs on the rim or above tree line in other areas, there may be a need to install condor deterrent devices on the structure. This will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Park wildlife biologist.
- If non-nesting condors occur within 1 mile of the project area, blasting will be postponed until condors leave or are hazed by permitted personnel.
- If condor nesting activity is known within 1 mile of the project area, then blasting activity will be restricted during the active nesting season. The active nesting season is February 1 to September 30. These dates may be modified based on the most current information, in consultation with the Park biologist and the USFWS.
- If condor nesting activity is known within 0.5 mile of the project area, then light and heavy construction in the project area will be restricted during the active nesting season. The active nesting season is February 1 to September 30. These dates may be modified based on the most current information, in consultation with the Park biologist and the USFWS.
- If a construction project occurs within a Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO) Protected Activity Center (PAC) with no known nest site, then all construction activity will be restricted to the non-breeding season (September 1 – February 28). However, if the project in a PAC is at least 0.8 km (0.5 mile) from known nest sites and the project does not include blasting, then the project can be implemented during the breeding season. The breeding season is March 1 – August 31.
- If a construction project outside of PACs occurs within 1.6 km (1 mile) of a known PAC nest or roost site, the boundary of a PAC where the nest or roost site is not known, or unsurveyed restricted, protected, or predicted MSO habitat, then all blasting in that project area will be restricted to the non-breeding season (September 1 – February 28).
- If a construction project outside of PACs occurs within 0.8 km (0.5 mile) of a known PAC nest or roost site, the boundary of a PAC where the nest or roost site is not known, or unsurveyed restricted, protected, or predicted MSO habitat, then light and heavy construction activity in that project area will be restricted to the non-breeding season (September 1 – February 28).
- Existing outdoor trash containers will be replaced with wildlife-proof trash containers.
- If previously unknown archeological resources are discovered during construction, a park archeologist will be contacted immediately. All work in the immediate vicinity of the discovery will be halted until the resources could be identified and documented and an appropriate mitigation

strategy developed, if necessary, in accordance with the stipulations of the 1995 Programmatic Agreement Among the National Park Service, the Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding the General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona.

- All workers will be informed of the penalties for illegally collecting artifacts or intentionally damaging any archeological or historic property. Workers will also be informed of the correct procedures if previously unknown resources were uncovered during construction activities.
- To minimize the potential for impacts to park visitors, variations on construction timing will be considered. Options include conducting the majority of the work in the off-season (winter) or shoulder seasons and implementing daily construction activity curfews. Unless additional time is authorized by park management, operation of construction equipment will not occur between the hours of 6 PM to 7 AM in summer (May – September), and 6 PM to 8 AM in the winter (October – April), to minimize the impacts of noise from construction activities to visitors and the Canyon's natural quiet.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Environmental Assessment evaluated two alternatives in detail for addressing the purpose and need for action; The No Action alternative and the Preferred Alternative. The preferred alternative is as described previously in this document in detail, but is also summarized briefly below:

Alternative A – No Action Alternative: This alternative does not meet the purpose and need for the project, but provides a basis for comparison with the action alternative. Alternative A would not change the existing situation. The Maswik Transportation Center, the current site of the Backcountry Information Center, would remain in its current condition. The Maswik Transportation Center was built in the early 1990s, before the completion of the park's General Management Plan. Its original use was to serve as a secondary point of arrival for Grand Canyon Railway passengers from Tusayan. A railroad spurline from Grand Canyon Airport into the park, serving as another means of mass transit for Park visitors, did not materialize. It would have been the point of arrival for up to 20% of South Rim visitors had this rail service been instituted. Since the mid-1990s, the facility has served as a Village Route shuttle bus stop combined with the Backcountry Information Center. Under this alternative, The backcountry permits office would remain in the Backcountry Information Center, with no changes to the existing building (Figure 4). The river/special use permits office would remain in a trailer, separate from the Backcountry Information Center (Figure 6) and long-term storage would remain in a third facility, a storage container, also separate from the Backcountry Information Center (Figure 5).

Alternative B – Preferred Alternative: Maswik Transportation Center would be renovated to provide a facility to accommodate all backcountry, river/special use permit functions and associated storage. The renovated Maswik Transportation Center would be approximately 4652 square feet in size from outside corner to outside corner, of which approximately 2160 square feet within the existing footprint would be new construction and the remaining would be remodeled space. The proposed renovation includes the installation of a fire and intrusion alarm system and a fire sprinkler system. The renovated building would include a lobby, sales area, restrooms, offices, and storage. The new exterior walls, windows and doors, necessary for the addition of interior space within the existing roofline, would match the existing structure in materials and colors. The building would meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. The roofline and supporting structure would remain unchanged. All of the spatial requirements of the facility would be met with the design of a new floor plan within the existing roofline and supporting structure. The existing river/special use permit office trailer would be vacated and the existing storage container used by the backcountry office would be made available for other uses.

The Environmental Assessment also includes a discussion of several other alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed analysis. Various possible locations for a new building(s) that would function as a combined backcountry and river permits office were initially explored by the park. Two different functional modes were also developed for the building based on the needs of the backcountry and river permits offices. These included a walk-up visitor contact (information kiosk) function (direct face-to-face contact between NPS personnel and visitors) and main office operations (interactions with visitors via telephone, mail and/or Internet and routine administration of the program. These two functional modes suggested three potential building types. Building types and potential site locations were combined into four distinct alternatives:

Alternative 1 – This alternative would construct a new building to provide walk-up visitor contact and main office operations on the Village Loop Site. This is an undisturbed site, requiring new access and new parking, but is within short walking distance of Bright Angel Trailhead and would likely result in minimal disturbance to park operations during construction. This site is within the Grand Canyon Village Historic District. When costs and benefits were compared, Alternative 1 received the lowest score of any of the alternatives. This alternative was dismissed from further detailed analysis exercise due to the fact that it would result in new ground disturbance, would result in impacts to the surrounding historic district, did not improve visitor convenience, was adjacent to a 100-year floodplain, and would cost more than the funds available.

Alternative 2 – This alternative would construct a new building to provide main office operations on the Village Loop Site and would construct a new building to provide walk-up visitor contact at the Bright Angel site. The Village Loop site is an undisturbed site, requiring new access and new parking, but is within walking distance of the Bright Angel Trailhead. The Bright Angel site is a disturbed site, has no parking, but is close to a shuttle bus stop, is next to the trailhead and would provide high potential for ranger contact with day hikers. Alternative 2 ranked similarly to some of the other alternatives but was dismissed from further detailed analysis. The Village Loop site was ruled out for the same reasons as described above in Alternative 1. Following further discussions with park staff and park management, Grand Canyon National Park determined that new building construction on the edge of the South Rim near the Bright Angel Trailhead was not in line with the long-term goals for the park. Goals stated in the 1995 GMP include providing necessary services and facilities in existing disturbed areas wherever possible and that new developments would be cost-effective, water-conserving and energy-efficient (GMP, page 5). The GMP also states that appropriate use and adaptive reuse of (historic) structures is encouraged (GMP, page 8). Although new construction on the South Rim near the trailhead is not specifically mentioned in the GMP, new construction in this location would not meet the intent of the GMP as clearly as adaptive reuse of an existing structure would. For this reason and the fact that this alternative was the most expensive and would likely cost significantly more than the funds available, Alternative 2 was dismissed from further detailed analysis.

Alternative 3 – This alternative would renovate the existing Maswik Transportation Center to provide main office operations and would construct a new building to provide walk-up visitor contact at the Bright Angel site. This alternative would use an existing facility (Maswik Transportation Center) that has existing utilities and parking and is close to a shuttle bus stop. The Bright Angel site is a disturbed site, has no parking but is close to a shuttle bus stop, is next to the trailhead and would provide opportunities for ranger contact with day hikers. For the reasons described under Alternative 2 related to new construction at the Bright Angel Trailhead site and the fact that this alternative would likely cost more than the funds available, Alternative 3 was dismissed from further detailed analysis. The renovation of the Maswik Transportation Center portion of this alternative is further refined and included as part of the preferred alternative described in the next section.

Alternative 4 – This alternative would construct a new building to provide main office operations at the Magistrate site and would construct a new building to provide walk-up visitor contact at the Bright Angel site. The Magistrate site is a disturbed site near existing buildings, has existing parking, is close to Ranger Operations search and rescue, and is located within the Grand Canyon Village Historic District. The Bright Angel Trailhead site is a disturbed site, has no parking, but is close to a shuttle bus stop, is next to the trailhead and would provide high potential for ranger contact with day hikers. This alternative would result in new ground disturbance and construction on the Magistrate site would result in impacts to the surrounding historic district. In addition, for the reasons described under Alternative 2 related to new construction at the Bright Angel site and the fact that this alternative was similar in cost to Alternative 2, Alternative 4 was dismissed from further detailed analysis.

Alternative 6 - This alternative would construct a new building to provide walk-up visitor contact and main office operations on the Magistrate site. The Magistrate site is a disturbed site near existing buildings, has existing parking, is close to Ranger Operations search and rescue, and is located within the Grand Canyon Village Historic District. Although the estimated cost of this alternative was lower than for the other alternatives and does not include construction near the Bright Angel Trailhead, this alternative was dismissed from further analysis due to the fact that construction on the Magistrate site would result in new ground disturbance and impacts to the surrounding historic district.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferred alternative is determined by applying the criteria suggested in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), which guides the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). The CEQ provides direction that “[t]he environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA’s Section 101:

- fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- assure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
- preserve important historic, cultural and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
- achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities; and
- enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

The preferred alternative is the environmentally preferred alternative. Potential resource impacts, visitor impacts, and mitigation measures were carefully reviewed. Alternative B best meets the purpose and need for action and best addresses the overall Park Service objectives and evaluation factors. No new information came forward from public scoping or consultation with other agencies to necessitate the development of any new alternatives, other than those described and evaluated in this document. Alternative B is recommended as the Preferred Alternative and meets the Purpose and Need, the project objectives, and meets the above criteria.

WHY THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

As defined in 40 CFR §1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. As fully discussed in the Environmental Assessment, the preferred alternative will not affect geology; soils; prime and unique agricultural land; air quality; soundscape; floodplains; vegetation; wetlands; state listed special status wildlife and plant species; federally listed wildlife and plant species (except the California condor and Mexican spotted owl, see below); local or regional socioeconomics; minorities or low-income populations or communities; or ethnographic resources.

Implementation of the preferred alternative may have negligible to minor short-term impacts to general wildlife populations due to increased noise during construction;

Implementation of the preferred alternative may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the federally listed California condor and Mexican spotted owl. This determination received concurrence from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service on July 9, 2002.

After applying the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's criteria for adverse effects (36 CFR, Part 800.5, Assessment of Adverse Effects), implementation of the preferred alternative will not affect historic resources and a "no historic properties affected" determination has been made. This determination received concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Office on November 22, 2002.

Degree of effect on public health or safety. The Environmental Assessment evaluated impacts to park operations and visitor experience. This evaluation determined that the consolidation of all backcountry, river and special use permitting and information functions would provide "one-stop shopping" for visitors, resulting in long-term beneficial impacts. Possible enclosure of the lobby area would provide a warmer environment in the winter/off-season and shelter for employees and visitors from shuttle bus noise and fumes. Consolidation of all functions in one building would reduce the amount of vehicle travel time between existing facilities for visitors and employees.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. As fully discussed in the Environmental Assessment, geological resources, soils, water, vegetation, archeological resources, historic resources, ethnographic resources, prime farmlands, and wetlands will not be affected by implementation of the preferred alternative. No wild and scenic rivers are near Grand Canyon Village and none will be affected by implementation of the preferred alternative. No ecologically critical areas, including critical habitat for threatened, endangered, or proposed species, have been designated in the project area and none will be affected. Implementation of the preferred alternative will result in a "no historic properties affected" determination. Implementation of the preferred alternative will result in a "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" determination for California condor and Mexican spotted owl. Consultation with concerned tribal officials, Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer, and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been completed.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial. There were no highly controversial effects identified during either preparation of the environmental assessment or the public review period.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. There were no highly uncertain, unique or unknown risks identified in the environmental assessment or during the public review period.

Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. The preferred alternative neither establishes a precedent for future actions with significant effect nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Impacts of the preferred alternative identified in the environmental assessment were to wildlife and special status species, visitor experience and park operations. As described in the environmental assessment, a variety of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions have affected or may affect resources in the Grand Canyon Village area. However, the adverse impacts of the preferred alternative will be a relatively minor component of the overall minor cumulative impact, due to the limited scope of the preferred alternative.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. The project area is an existing disturbed site with a building on it. The project would not result in any new ground disturbance and would be limited to the area within the existing roofline. Therefore, the potential for impacts to archeological sites is minimal. Consultation with the concerned tribal officials has been completed.

If previously unknown archeological resources are discovered during construction, all work in the immediate vicinity of the discovery will be halted until the resources are identified and documented. An appropriate mitigation strategy, if necessary, will be developed in consultation with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office and concerned tribal officials.

Maswik Transportation Center is not listed on, nor eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The existing trailer used by the river/special use permits office is not historic nor is the storage facility in the maintenance area. The Backcountry Information Center is located near the Grand Canyon Village National Historic Landmark District, but is not within the district boundary. Evaluation of the Area of Potential Effects by the park's Historical Architect resulted in a determination that there will be no visual or physical effect on the nearby Historic District or any historic building as a result of this project. It has been determined that implementation of the preferred alternative will result in a "no historic properties" determination and SHPO has concurred with this determination.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat. The California condor was listed as an endangered species in 1967. A nonessential, experimental population of California condors has been established in Northern Arizona, and within Grand Canyon National Park the condor has the full protection of a threatened species. It has been determined by park staff that implementation of the preferred alternative "may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect" the California condor. This determination is based on the potential that condors could be attracted to the increased activity at the project site during construction. Mitigation measures have been developed jointly between park staff and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the condor during project implementation. These measures are included as part of the proposed action and identified under the preferred alternative. The FWS has been consulted and concurred with the determination that condors may be affected, but are not likely to be adversely affected by the implementation of the preferred alternative. The Mexican spotted owl was listed as a threatened species in 1993 and parts of Grand Canyon National Park were designated as critical habitat in 2001. It has been determined by park staff that implementation of the preferred alternative "may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect" the Mexican spotted owl. This determination is based on the fact that owl habitat is not present within the project area, owls have not been detected in the project area, and the nearest Protected

Activity Center is greater than 0.5 miles away. The FWS has been consulted and concurred with the determination that spotted owls may be affected, but are not likely to be adversely affected by the implementation of the preferred alternative.

Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, state, or local environmental protection law. The preferred alternative violates no federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES OR VALUES

In addition to determining the environmental consequences of the preferred and other alternatives, National Park Service policy (*Management Policies*, 2001) requires analysis of potential effects to determine whether or not actions will impair park resources. The fundamental purpose of the National Park System, established by the Organic Act and reaffirmed by the General Authorities Act as amended, begins with a mandate to conserve park resources and values. National Park Service managers must always seek ways to avoid, or to minimize to the greatest degree practicable, adverse impacts on park resources and values. However, the laws do give the National Park Service the management discretion to allow impacts to park resources and values when necessary and appropriate to fulfill the purposes of the park, as long as the impact does not constitute impairment of the affected resources and values. Although Congress has given the National Park Service the management discretion to allow certain impacts within parks, that discretion is limited by the statutory requirement that the National Park Service must leave park resources and values unimpaired, unless a particular law directly and specifically provides otherwise.

The prohibited impairment is an impact that, in the professional judgment of the responsible National Park Service manager, will harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise will be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values. Impairment may result from National Park Service activities in managing the park, visitor activities, or activities undertaken by concessionaires, contractors, and others operating in the park. An impact to any park resource or value may constitute impairment. An impact will be more likely to constitute impairment to the extent that it affects a resource or value whose conservation is:

- Necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park;
- Key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park; or
- Identified as a goal in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents.

Because there will be no major adverse impacts to a resource or value whose conservation is (1) necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of Grand Canyon National Park; (2) key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park; or (3) identified as a goal in the park's general management plan or other relevant National Park Service planning documents, there will be no impairment of Grand Canyon National Park's resources or values as a result of implementation of the preferred alternative.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A public scoping letter for the Backcountry Information Center project was sent to a mailing list of approximately 300 people on February 22, 2002. A press release was also issued and the scoping letter was posted on the park's website. Four letters were received. These included a letter from the Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department, the Hopi Tribe Cultural Preservation Office and two private individuals. The responses from the Navajo Nation and the Hopi Tribe offered no specific comment on the proposal and thanked the park for keeping them informed. One private individual brought up concerns regarding funding for the project. The other individual brought up concerns regarding the original construction of the Maswik Transportation Center and offered several viewpoints on what to do with

Maswik Transportation Center and suggestions on consolidation of the backcountry and river permit offices. The Park Service performed a content analysis on this information, information gained from internal scoping, and information gained from scoping with other agencies. From this effort, the Park Service did not identify any additional significant issues for analysis.

The environmental assessment was made available for public review and comment during a 30-day period ending December 9, 2002 through a combination of direct mailing, issuance of a press release and posting on the park's website. Four letters were received. These included concurrence from the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office on the determination of no historic properties affected, a letter from the Navajo Nation indicated no concerns with the proposal and two letters from private individuals. One individual voiced concerns over wasting tax dollars and doubts regarding improvements in visitor experience. The other individual raised concerns about the park's implementation of the General Management Plan. The Park Service performed a content analysis on this information and did not identify any new substantive issues.

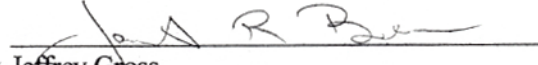
This project was included in a Biological Assessment for Grand Canyon National Park's Parkwide Construction Program in 2002-2006. This Biological Assessment included 61 projects and formed the basis for a Batch Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in June 2002. On July 9, 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the park's determination that implementation of these projects, including the Backcountry Information Center, may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the Mexican spotted owl, the California condor, the bald eagle and the sentry milk-vetch. The species applicable to the Backcountry Information Center are the Mexican Spotted Owl and the California condor.

CONCLUSION

The preferred alternative does not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). Negative environmental impacts that could occur are minor and temporary in effect. There are no unmitigated adverse impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, known ethnographic resources, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law.


Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that the project does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and an EIS will not be required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Recommended:


Jeffrey Cross
Science Center Director, Grand Canyon National Park


1/30/03
Date

Recommended:


Joseph F. Alston
Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park

2/6/03
Date

Approved:


Karen P. Wade
Intermountain Regional Director

02/27/03
Date